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## THE MONROE DOCTRINE AND THE ISTHMIAN CANAL.

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MORE than twelve years have elapsed since the traditional faith of the American people in what is vaguely known, but vigorously clung to, as the "Monroe doctrine" was last invoked, and invoked with signal success, by the American Government, to sustain it in carrying out an important measure of foreign policy. Now that once again the "Monroe doctrine" has become the theme of politicians and of the press, it is of importance, not only that the origin and the true significance of this doctrine should be clearly and calmly set before the public mind, but also that the history of its previous applications to the practical policy of the United States should be briefly and yet sufficiently recited.

It has unfortunately grown almost into a mental habit with the American people to look at every question which comes under debate before them in a Presidential year from the point of view of its possible or probable relation to the aims and aspirations, either of individual candidates for the Presidency, or of one or another great party in the republic. This is, no doubt, an inevitable incident of popular government in all countries, and it marks, though not perhaps so deeply in the one case as in the other, the course of political history in England as well as in the United States. In both countries it is a thing to be deplored, especially in its influence upon the popular apprehension of questions affecting the foreign policy of the national Government. In the case now before us, for example, a very cursory glance at the general tenor of the discussions which have been provoked in the daily press by the message of President Hayes to Congress touching the projects of M. de Lesseps on the Isthmus of Panama, and by the resolutions concerning these projects which on one or the other political side of either House have been introduced into both chambers of Congress,

suffices to show that the wide and permanent national aspects of the issues raised in that message and in these resolutions have so far attracted much less attention than the possible advantages to be secured to one political party or to another by the affirmation of or by the refusal to affirm the "Monroe doctrine." As was to be expected, it seldom occurs to the disputants on either side to represent clearly to themselves or to their readers precisely what this "Monroe doctrine" may be, which they so eagerly endorse in some cases and in other cases so angrily denounce. It is fought over, in fact, quite as hotly and quite as blindly in America as the legendary will of Peter the Great in Russia. Yet there can be no doubt that, whether understood or misunderstood, the Monroe doctrine really, and not inaccurately, represents to observing foreign statesmen a deep, ineradicable, and most formidable instinct in the character of the American people, just as the legendary will of Peter the Great represents to observing foreign statesmen a deep, ineradicable, and most formidable instinct in the character of the Russian people.

It matters little whether the inspired despot who first thrust forward the power of the Muscovites, like a lance-head of Asia into the flank of Europe, did or did not bid his descendants aim steadily and unshrinkingly at the control of the Bosphorus and the possession of the great world-capital of Constantine. From the moment that the millions of the Russian race came together into a common consciousness of their nationality, a law higher than the will of any Czar made this the inevitable aim, not of a dynasty, but of a race. In like manner, it is of slight consequence to inquire what the specific aim of President Monroe may have been when he introduced into his message to Congress, of December 2, 1823, the declarations which have since been known under the name of the "Monroe doctrine." From the moment when the American States, united into a single nation, got possession of the valley of the Mississippi, it became a law of their national growth that they should repel every attempt, under any form whatever made, to introduce a controlling European influence over any portion of that great American Mediterranean into which the Mississippi pours the gathered waters of the great West.

As a matter of historical fact there is little doubt that President Monroe himself but partially appreciated the force and scope of his own declarations. He was not a man of great abilities, and, as is clearly apparent from his book (which General Washington contemptuously called his "voluminous work") on the "Conduct

of the Executive in the Foreign Affairs of the United States," he was a thorough partisan, and really quite incapable of rising above the level of immediate partisan motives, either in deciding upon his own political course or in forming a judgment as to the political course of other men. His famous declarations were imposed upon him by the course of events in Europe and by the superior will of his Secretary of State.

After the Congress of Verona, in 1822, the Legitimist Government of France, in close alliance with the absolute Government of Austria, undertook to organize an effective crusade for the suppression of what the "friends of order" regarded as a recrudescence of the destructive revolutionary ideas of 1789 throughout Europe and the dependencies of Europe. The armies of Austria were marched into Italy to put down the Liberal movements in Piedmont and in Naples. The armies of France, under the Duke of Angoulême, were marched into Spain in the spring of 1823, to reëstablish the tyranny of Ferdinand VII. Great efforts were made to seduce England into the projects of the alliance, and offers were even conveyed to the Court of St. James of an eventual coöperation of the Continental powers with Great Britain to curb first and then to crush the rising power of those revolted British colonies in the West, which, as the United States of America, had already extended their dominion far beyond the limits recognized by the treaties of 1783, and which were making serious inroads all over the world upon the mercantile predominance of Great Britain after inflicting, in the war of 1812-'15, a by no means unimportant blow upon her naval prestige.

Had these offers not carried with them a necessity on the part of Great Britain of acquiescing in the steps which the allies proposed to take for reëstablishing the American empire of Spain, then already shaken to pieces by the revolutionary movements which, beginning in South America with the establishment of Joseph Bonaparte at Madrid, had extended to Mexico, it is by no means certain that the Government of George IV. might not have lent a listening ear to them. George Canning, then really at the head of the Cabinet, though nominally but Foreign Secretary, shared the alarm and disgust of the extreme Tories at the agitation for Parliamentary reform, and certainly regarded the democratic institutions of the United States with extreme aversion. But, in the liberated countries of Spanish America, England had found a new market from which for centuries she had been shut out by the

jealous policy of Spain. It was an epoch of colonial stock-gambling in London in the bonds of the Spanish-American states, and in enterprises of all kinds within the area of what had been the secluded and inaccessible domain of Castile and Leon in the New World.

Apart from all other considerations, the commercial importance to England of the independence of Spanish America determined the British Foreign Secretary to throw the whole weight of British power and British influence against the successful reëstablishment in the New World of that exclusive policy under which, for three centuries, Spain had closed the ports of either ocean from the Gulf of Mexico to Cape Horn against the traffic of the world. To this end Mr. Canning sought interviews with the then American Minister in England, Mr. Rush, of Pennsylvania, an amiable and intelligent man, and, communicating to him so much of what was going on between his own Cabinet and those of St. Petersburg, Berlin, Paris, and Vienna, as seemed to him well fitted to awaken the fears of the American people, urged him to promote some demonstration on the part of the American Government which might give the Continental powers reason to expect active opposition from the United States in the execution of their designs upon Mexico, New Granada, and the other Spanish-American states.

There was little or nothing in the attitude of revolutionary Spanish America toward the United States to suggest to an American Minister such a demonstration in their favor. Independent Mexico, under Iturbide, had shown no friendly regard for the United States. On the contrary, indeed, it was well known to the American Government of that day that the Mexicans regarded the cession both of Louisiana and of Florida to the United States as invalid acts, and that one of the projects of Iturbide, during his brief tenure of the imperial power in Mexico, had been to organize a serious demand upon the United States for the surrender to the Mexican Empire of the whole coast of the Mexican Gulf, from what is now the frontier of the State of Texas to the capes of Florida.

These are strange things to think of now, but it is necessary to bear them in mind when dealing with a question which, like this of the Monroe doctrine, goes down to the roots of our national being as a great power, and touches all the essential and enduring conditions of that being. Twenty years had barely passed away, at the time of which we are speaking, since the navigation of the Mississippi

had been obstructed by Spanish forts, and Spanish intrigues had been carried on with the Indians of what is now the valley of the great West, and American settlers maltreated within the territory of what are now the American States of Kentucky and Tennessee, by Spanish officers. A Senator of the United States had been found guilty of carrying on treasonable negotiations with English agents against the possessions of Spain. The cession of Florida to the United States by Spain, in 1821, was regarded, as we have said, with extreme anger by the Mexicans. There was nothing in the immediate past, therefore, and little in the apparent immediate future of the Spanish-American countries to prepossess the United States in favor of a policy intended chiefly to consolidate and develop the power of those countries. But it concerned the United States considerably that the commerce of these countries should not again be monopolized by Spain; for American goods and the American flag were then more widely known both on the Atlantic and the Pacific coasts of Spanish America than they are to-day; and it concerned the United States still more deeply to prevent the transfer to the New World of the mighty struggle between the arbitrary and the popular systems of government by which Europe had so long been convulsed.

When, therefore, Mr. Rush communicated to the American Secretary of State, Mr. John Quincy Adams, the substance of the conversations had by him with Mr. Canning, Mr. Adams at once saw in them, what neither Mr. Rush nor President Monroe seems to have seen, an opportunity not to be trifled with for notifying, not the Holy Alliance of the Continent alone, but Great Britain herself and the new Spanish-American states as well, that the system of the United States Government had been formed not for greatness only but for growth, and that the ages of European adventure in the New World had come to an end. It was with some difficulty that Mr. Adams brought the chief of his Government up to the point of taking the firm and advanced position upon which his own ardent and determined nature had instantly seized. Mr. Monroe saw clearly enough that the views which Mr. Adams had formulated and which he was asked to incorporate with his annual message, were by no means likely to gratify the British Minister. He dreaded the possible complications to result from giving expression to them, and he was anxious and uncertain as to the support which would be given him, particularly by the adherents of a great man then foremost among the rising public characters of the

Union, without whose support he knew that nothing could be done with the most vigorous and popular elements in the country. As to this last point, he was soon reassured by the emphatic declarations which General Jackson made, both in public and in private, of his perfect readiness to draw his sword, if need be, in maintenance of the positions assumed by the Secretary of State. His hesitation on other grounds was overborne by the impetuous earnestness of his high-spirited Minister, and he finally adopted as his own the declarations prepared for him by Mr. Adams.

The sum of the suggestions made by Mr. Canning to Mr. Rush is conveyed in the artful question put by him to the American envoy: "Are the great *political* and *commercial* interests which hang upon the destinies of the New World to be canvassed and adjusted in Europe without the coöperation or even the knowledge of the United States?" It was the expectation of Mr. Canning that, in response to this question, the American Government would come forward with a declaration of its views which would put it in the attitude of an ally of Great Britain, coöperating with that power, and of course under the leadership of that power, in the councils of the great states of Europe upon questions affecting "the political and commercial interests" of the Western Continent. By the events of 1815, it must be remembered, and through the policy adopted after the Peace of Vienna by the great Continental states, England had become isolated as a constitutional monarchy in Europe. It was the weight added to English influence in Europe, and not at all the new importance given to the United States, that Mr. Canning had in his mind when, after the receipt of the message of President Monroe in Europe, he uttered the famous boast in the House of Commons that he had called a New World into existence to redress the balance of the Old. For him, and for all who saw England as the foremost country in the present and future of the concert of nations, that was the sole worthy and real significance of the "Monroe doctrine." Far otherwise was it with the great American author of the "Monroe doctrine" !

Mr. Adams thoroughly and always throughout his long life appreciated the absolute incompatibility of European, and especially of English, influence with American greatness and growth in the New World. He was cognizant of the efforts made by England, at a very early period, in the movement which resulted in the separation of the Captaincy-General of Guatemala from the Spanish crown, to extend the English claims, founded upon a casual occupancy of the

Islands of San Andres and La Providencia, to the mainland of what are now the Republics of Nicaragua and Costa Rica and to the territory of Veraguas. It was with an indirect reference (which was, however, perfectly well understood in London) to these efforts that, in a passage of the message of December 2, 1823, he induced Mr. Monroe to lay down, as touching the Anglo-Russian questions of our northwestern boundary, "the principle in which the rights and interests of the United States are involved, that the American Continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintained, are henceforth not to be considered as future subjects for colonization by any European power." Nothing could have less resembled the subsidiary assent to England's European leadership in American questions, which Mr. Canning had hoped to extract from the United States Government through Mr. Rush, than this sweeping and cleaving declaration, and it is not surprising that it should have been received by Mr. Canning, as it was, with ill-concealed chagrin and vexation.

This chagrin and vexation were not diminished by the skill with which Mr. Adams also contrived to insert in the very core of that specific declaration against the projects of the Holy Alliance, which Mr. Canning plumed himself before the Commons upon securing, a plain intimation of the purpose of the United States not to permit any further "political or commercial" control by any European power of the destinies of the New World.

After stating, in cool and measured terms, the differences existing between the political system of the allied powers in Europe and that of the United States, Mr. Monroe in his message was made by Mr. Adams to say : "We owe it, therefore, to candor and to the amicable relations existing between the United States and those powers to declare that we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety. With existing colonies or dependencies of any European power we have not interfered and shall not interfere. But with the governments which have declared their independence and maintained it, and whose independence we have on great considerations and on just principles acknowledged, we could not view any interposition, for the purpose of oppressing them, or *controlling in any other manner their destiny, by any European power*, in any other light than as the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States."

In the words which we have here italicized, Mr. Adams gave Mr.

Canning to understand, as distinctly as comported with the proprieties of public intercourse between friendly states, that the United States were so far from any disposition to permit the "political and commercial" interests of the new continent to be "canvassed and adjusted in Europe without the coöperation or even the knowledge of the United States," that any attempt at "canvassing and adjusting" these interests in Europe would be regarded as a proof of hostile feeling toward the United States, whether made at Paris, at Vienna, at Berlin—or at London !

In its origin and in its true significance, as we have seen, what we call the "Monroe doctrine" appears to be, and may be truly described as being, the Second Declaration of American Independence. If we judge the message of December 2, 1823, by the light of what is generally known as the international law of Europe, it will be seen that it really secludes and segregates the Continent of America from the operation of that international law. It has, indeed, been repeatedly denounced and protested against by able European writers on international law on this very ground. But it has been contended, also, and with much show of logic, by British writers, that the action of the States of Holland and of the French monarchy in forming an alliance with the revolted colonies of Great Britain was taken in violation of the principles and precedents of the international law of Europe ; and the truth is that, from the nature of human society itself, the formation of any new and great power within the circle of an existing family of nations always implies and brings about great and radical changes in the essentially conventional system of international law. We have been witnessing the evidence of this, from year to year, in the condition of Europe ever since the formation of the great and united German Empire in 1870.

In the New World, as in the Old World, international law must mean and can only mean a general system under which the weaker states included in it are enabled to live on terms of peace and reasonable equity in their relations with the stronger states. For Europe international law, therefore, means the principles and lines of general policy agreed upon tacitly or explicitly, as the case may be, between the greater European powers from time to time. For America, where there now exists, and in the nature of the case must for a long time to come continue to exist, but one great power, the United States, international law means, and must continue to mean, the system under which the United States, while pro-

tecting their own interests and securing their own development, can find it possible to live on terms of peace and reasonable equity with the weaker American states. In the Monroe doctrine, Mr. Adams formulated for us the first full and deliberate expression of the fact that such a system must be based, first of all, upon the complete exclusion of the great powers of Europe from all interference, "political and commercial," with the interests of the American Continent. This does not mean that the United States are to monopolize the commerce of the American Continent, or to meddle with the domestic politics of the weaker states of the American Continent. On the contrary, it means that, by keeping the interests and *all the interests* of the American Continent free from the domination of European interests in any form, the United States will avert from the American Continent the perils of war inherent in those inevitable complications of one set of European interests with another set of European interests, which are to be looked for under a system constructed to be worked now by the joint action and again by the contradictory action of three or four or five great powers, as the case may be.

On two important occasions, and on two important occasions only, since the publication of the Monroe doctrine, have its principles been involved in any practical connection with the action of the United States. On the first of these occasions those principles were practically disregarded, with results to the disadvantageous and troublesome influence of which our whole subsequent diplomatic and commercial history bears witness. On the second of these occasions those principles were recognized and applied with results to the happy and beneficent influence of which our whole subsequent diplomatic and commercial history bears witness.

In the year 1849 Mr. Hise, then Chargé d'Affaires of the United States in Guatemala, signed a treaty with the Republic of Nicaragua, under which that republic granted to the United States an exclusive right of way across her territory for the purpose of connecting the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans by a canal. In this treaty the United States guaranteed to Nicaragua the protection of her whole territory, and assured Nicaragua of support in any war for its defense. It was well known at the time when this treaty was negotiated that Nicaragua had suffered an invasion of her territory by Great Britain under certain absurd pretensions founded upon an alleged convention between Great Britain and an alleged King of the Mosquito Indians. There were rumors also in the air of an intention on the

part of certain factions in Nicaragua to seek foreign aid from lawless persons in the United States and elsewhere in stirring up domestic troubles in that country. From whatever point of view it may be regarded, it will be seen that the treaty negotiated by Mr. Hise was drawn up in substantial accordance with the principle acted upon by Mr. Adams and President Monroe in 1823.

At the time when that treaty reached the United States, Mr. Clayton, of Delaware, was Secretary of State, and Lord Palmerston was Secretary of Foreign Affairs in Great Britain. Discerning as he thought in this treaty a speck of coming difficulty with Great Britain, Mr. Clayton received it with something not unlike consternation. He sent for the then British Minister in Washington, Mr. Crampton (the same person whom a few years afterward it became the duty of another American Administration to dismiss peremptorily from the country for his audacious and flagrant violations of our laws in connection with the Crimean war), and, laying the text of the Hise Treaty before him, expressed his entire opposition to that treaty, and incited Mr. Crampton to assure Lord Palmerston of his anxious desire to enter into joint arrangements with Great Britain for the adjustment of the canal question in the first place, and for the settlement of the claims of Nicaragua in the second place. Anything less in keeping both with the spirit and with the letter of the declarations made by Mr. Adams in 1823, than these extraordinary communications made by Mr. Clayton to Mr. Crampton, can not easily be imagined. It is painful for an American to recall this incident in our history, but the circumstances of Mr. Clayton's conversation with Mr. Crampton on this occasion are so instructive, and throw so clear a light on the fatal consequences already alluded to by us of looking at great questions of foreign policy only in their relations to the domestic strife of parties, that it is proper, if not pleasant, to set them down as they are recorded by the British interlocutor.

On the 17th of September, 1849, Mr. Crampton wrote to his chief, Lord Palmerston, that Mr. Clayton had made a pathetic appeal to him on the ground of "the embarrassing situation" in which the Hise Treaty had placed the United States Government. "'You know,' he said'" (observe that this is a British envoy quoting the language used to him by the Secretary of State of the United States), "'that the Government have no majority in the Senate; you know that the treaty will be called for by Congress; the substance of it, indeed, has already found its way into the newspapers. You are

aware of the opinion which, whether right or wrong, is generally entertained in this country of the claim of the Mosquito chief to any part of the territory claimed by Nicaragua ; and you can form an idea of the eagerness with which the party opposed to the Government will avail themselves of the opportunity of either forcing us into a collision with Great Britain on this subject, or of making it appear that we have abandoned, through pusillanimity, great and splendid advantages fairly secured to the country by treaty.’”

A more humiliating picture than this was probably never presented by the premier of one great country to the envoy of another. The consequences were precisely what they might have been expected to be. Mr. Crampton at once replied that while he had nothing to say about the Isthmus passage, he could offer no hope that “her Majesty’s Government would recede from the position taken by it in regard to the rights of the Mosquito King.”

This was the beginning of the long and weary negotiations which were finally taken up by Sir Henry Bulwer, and which culminated (after a most skillful use by Sir Henry of the advantages given away at the outset so scandalously by Mr. Clayton to Great Britain) in the notorious Convention of April 19, 1850, known as the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty, a treaty utterly inconsistent with the principles laid down by Mr. Adams and Mr. Monroe in 1823. What have been the results of this deplorable departure from the Monroe doctrine? So far from insuring peace and order in the relations of the United States with Great Britain and with Central America, it continued, until it was gradually dropped by the tacit consent of both powers into a semi-oblivion, to breed new quarrels and perils of war with each successive year. It led to the bombardment of Greytown by an American squadron, to chastise outrages upon American citizens perpetrated with the connivance of and at the direct instigation of British officials, exercising an illegal authority. It has hampered and delayed ever since the solution of great commercial questions, of grave importance to the welfare not only of the United States but of the Central American states ; and its specter is now invoked to darken and disturb the settlement of the question of an Isthmian Canal on the only sound and stable basis on which that question ever can be settled, of an absolute and unchallenged American protectorate in the interest of the innocent use and commerce of all civilized states ! Contrast with this case the effectual assertion by Mr. Seward in 1867 of the principles of the Monroe doctrine in the matter of the French attempt to aid the Clerical and Conser-

vative party of Mexico to establish an empire in that country under the Archduke Maximilian of Austria.

That a large party in Mexico, including many of the wealthiest and most reputable of its people, ardently desired the establishment of the throne of Maximilian is unquestionable. It is unquestionable, also, that during at least two years of his nominal reign the Emperor Maximilian exercised a practically undisputed authority over a very great portion, and that the richest and most populous portion, of the Mexican territory. There is, indeed, no reason to suppose that his sway over the country might not have continued to this day, could he have secured the recognition of his government as a legal government by the Government of the United States. Why was that recognition refused? What justification can be found for our refusing it outside of the solid American groundwork of the "Monroe doctrine"? Mr. Seward refused that recognition—incurring in the refusal, as he did, the constant peril of bringing on hostilities between this country, rocking in the midst of a great civil strife, and the then most powerful Government of Europe, the empire of Napoleon III.—on the one clear and definite ground that the United States can not and will not view the interposition, in the affairs of any of the countries on this continent, of any European power, for the purpose of oppressing them or "of otherwise controlling their destiny," in any other light than as a sign of hostile feelings toward the American people. Not only this: Mr. Seward finally took active steps to compel the withdrawal from Mexico of the French army of occupation—an army sent there, as M. Michel Chevalier, speaking with the authority of a trusted counselor of the empire, did not hesitate, in 1864, to say and to print, expressly for the double purpose of "reaffirming the position of Europe, shaken by the arrogance of the American democracy and wounded by acts perpetrated in the name of the Monroe doctrine, and of resuming for Europe the exercise of faculties which belong to her in the general interest of civilization, as well as in her own interest."

The French army of occupation was withdrawn from Mexico. The Monroe doctrine was asserted in all the breadth and depth of the principles which it represents and stands for. What have been the results of this assertion? Thirteen years of profound peace between the United States and the rest of the world.

Can anything be more plain than the lesson read us by this rapid summary of the history of the Monroe doctrine in regard to the actual situation created by the schemes of M. de Lesseps? Is it not

perfectly obvious that nothing but a determination to escape, if possible, from the operation of the principles of the Monroe doctrine can adequately explain the failure of M. de Lesseps and of his coadjutors to begin their enterprise by seeking for it the recognition and by putting it under the direct protection of the United States? On what grounds can France or Great Britain or Germany claim a right to divide with the United States the duty of supervising and controlling, in the interests of all mankind, a great ocean waterway which can not be constructed without making the protection of some great power or powers essential to the preservation of order along its line, and of the investments represented in it, and which, if constructed, must immediately and profoundly affect the political and commercial relations of the Pacific with the Atlantic territories of the American Union? If the principles of the Monroe doctrine, as we have ascertained them in this rapid review of their history and their working, do not directly and forcibly apply to the question of an Isthmian Canal, as that question has of late been brought before us by M. de Lesseps, to what conceivable question connected with American affairs can those principles ever so apply?